

SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR LIST SHOPPING
OVER A COMPUTER NETWORK

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

5 The present invention pertains to commercial transactions conducted over a computer network, and more particularly to a system and method for selecting and purchasing a plurality of items on such a network.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

10 Conducting commercial transactions over computer networks such as the Internet is commonplace today. As the number of Internet shoppers continues to increase, the number and corresponding dollar value of goods and services, i.e., items, purchased electronically in such manner also continues to increase. However, conventional techniques for searching for items to be purchased, 15 viewing specifications and prices of such items, and purchasing such items suffer from a significant drawback.

Specifically, in order to conduct such transactions today, a consumer has to search for such items one at a time by accessing and browsing web pages of a website, one web page and one website at a time. Searching for and purchasing 20 items of interest in this manner is a very tedious, time consuming and frustrating process. Even the most sophisticated and advanced shopping search engines, such as www.MySimon.Com, which enables a shopper to enter product specifications, and then searches for the websites of participating merchants that

may carry the items being searched, still requires that searching and purchasing be done one item at a time, one web page and one website at a time. Accordingly, it is an objective of the present invention to overcome the foregoing drawback.

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SUMMARY

A system and method for conducting commercial transactions over the Internet, whereby a shopper can simultaneously search for a plurality of items on a plurality of websites in a single search. The shopper specifies the items of interest to be searched and can also specify and/or exclude websites to be searched. In addition, the system searches a selectively alterable set of default websites. To use the invention, the shopper enters a list of items in response to a series of prompts. The system then simultaneously searches for all of the specified items on the default sites and those specified by the shopper. Information regarding the items retrieved as a result of the search is then displayed for viewing by the shopper. The shopper can simultaneously purchase selected ones of said items.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 shows a flowchart depicting the operation of the present invention.

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DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

The present invention enables a shopper to selectively designate a plurality of items which they wish to purchase, simultaneously conduct a single search for said items on a plurality of websites, view information found 5 regarding the specified items, and then purchase all or some of these items. This enables shoppers to search for and purchase items without having to engage in the tedious and time-consuming process of searching for items one at a time, one web page and one website at a time as is conventionally done. The user can also simultaneously search for different types of items using the present invention.

10 The system and method of the present invention is implemented by software. The software is used in conjunction with a website that the shopper would visit to shop for items to be purchased. The software presents a series of on-screen prompts in response to which the shopper specifies the items to be searched and specifies information/preferences and/or answers questions 15 regarding the items so that a search can be conducted for such items. The software causes a search to be conducted on websites specified by the shopper and/or on a selectively alterably set of default websites specified in the software. The results of the search are then displayed on a display device for viewing by 20 the shopper who can purchase selected ones or all of the items found in the search, or further refine the search.

FIG. 1 shows a flow chart depicting the operation of the present invention. At step 1, a shopper enters via keyboard, mouse, stylus, voice or otherwise, a list

of the items they wish to purchase. Alternatively, a shopper can select items to be searched from a default list of items offered by the program such as by checking boxes for ingredients to be purchased from a website or database that sells food products. At step 2, the shopper reviews the shopping list. At step 3, the shopper 5 decides whether to edit the shopping list. If the shopper wants to edit the shopping list, then the shopper does so at step 4 and the shopper can review the list at step 2. If, however, at step 3, the shopper decides not to edit the shopping list, then at step 5 the shopper is prompted to indicate whether they want to specify any particular website or sites to be searched. If the shopper decides to 10 specify a preferred website or sites, then at step 6 the shopper specifies such site or sites and/or excludes sites to be searched for some or all of the items in the shopping list entered at step 1.

At step 7, the shopper views the list of websites they specified. At step 8, the shopper is prompted to indicate whether they wish to edit the websites they 15 specified. If so, then at step 9, the shopper edits the websites, and then at step 7 they can view the list of sites. If however, at step 8, the shopper decides not to edit the list of websites they specified, then at step 10 the list of specified sites is sent to the server of the website on which the software is running. At step 11, the server can either approve or reject the site or sites selected by the shopper. If the 20 server approves the site or sites selected by the shopper, then at step 12 the server searches both the specified sites and the default sites for the items on the shopping list.

At step 13, the server writes the results, i.e., data gathered, of the search for all of the items from all of the sites searched into a file and formats the file. At step 14, the server sends the file to the shopper's access device. The file can be presented to the shopper in any form, including in a series of lists, wherein each 5 list corresponds to items found on different websites or databases, or wherein each list is comprised of similar types of items or similarly priced items. The list of items can be presented for viewing by the shopper using any desired criteria.

At step 15, the shopper reviews the file and selects and approves for purchase those items it desires and such approval is sent to the server. At step 16, the 10 server places an order at the appropriate website or sites for the items selected and approved for purchase by the shopper and then sends a confirmation to the shopper.

If at step 11, the server rejects the choice of websites specified by the shopper, then at step 17 the server returns the list of specified sites together with 15 the list of default sites to the shopper. At step 18, the shopper chooses and prioritizes the specified sites and/or selects to only search the default sites recommended by the server. At step 19, the revised list of sites are then sent to the server at step 12 from where the process continues as previously described above.

20 If at step 5 the shopper does not specify any websites, then the list of items to be purchased are sent at step 20 to the server. From step 20, the server returns

the list of default sites to step 17 from which point the process continues as previously described above.

It will further aid in understanding the operation of the present invention to consider the following example. If a shopper wants to shop for ingredients for 5 a meal, the recipe or recipes for the meal are presented on-screen with a check box in front of each required ingredient, along with option entry blanks for the shopper to select or exclude items and to indicate other information such as how many servings are to be prepared.

After the shopper enters their preferences/selections, the shopper is 10 presented with a list of suppliers from whom they can purchase the goods. The shopper then selects and prioritizes the list of suppliers in order of descending preference. The website or database of the first most preferred supplier is then searched for the desired items on the list, and data regarding said items is collected and compiled. Then the website or database of the second most 15 preferred supplier is searched for the specified items with said data being collected and compiled. The websites or databases of the remaining suppliers are similarly searched in order of descending preference.

The search results are then displayed for viewing by the shopper in a plurality of lists including product information, e.g., brand and price 20 information, for each item with a separate list being displayed for each of the respective suppliers. If items are not available from the first most preferred supplier, those items would be listed separately in the first most preferred

supplier list as being available from the next, e.g., second, most preferred supplier from whom they could be purchased. If the desired items are not available from the first or second most preferred supplier, such items would be listed separately in the first most preferred supplier list as being available from the next, e.g., third, most preferred supplier. Similarly, if in the list for items from the second most preferred supplier there are items not available from the second most preferred supplier, the list would indicate whether those items were available from the first most preferred supplier, from the third most preferred supplier or from other suppliers in descending order of preferred suppliers.

10 The shopper then chooses one list of goods, and places an order for the entire list of items at one time. Alternatively, the shopper could choose and place an order for goods from different lists. The software program then automatically places orders at the specified suppliers for all of the items in the list, and sends one confirmation to the shopper when the process is completed.

15 The present invention is implemented using software which can be written in many programming languages, or implemented with many data and information displaying or web-page generation tools. The present invention can be used on a global or local computer network, on a personal computer, on viewable storage media such as a CD or DVD ROM, on a wireless telephone, on 20 a wireless personal assistant such as a Palm Pilot®, or on any type of wired or wireless device that enables digitally stored information to be viewed. Also,

information displayed and viewed using the present invention can be printed, stored to other storage medium, and electronically mailed to third parties.

Numerous modifications to and alternative embodiments of the present invention will be apparent to those skilled in the art in view of the foregoing description. Accordingly, this description is to be construed as illustrative only and is for the purpose of teaching those skilled in the art the best mode of carrying out the invention. Details of the embodiment may be varied without departing from the spirit of the invention, and the exclusive use of all modifications which come within the scope of the appended claims is reserved.